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ABSTRACT

This report provides information on programs and developments during the 1980-81 academic year in the Institute of Study for Older Adults (ISOA) Liberal Arts program which provided more than 158 courses to over 3,600 disadvantaged elderly residents of New York City. The first section concentrates on progress towards continuing objectives--in particular towards involving students in the selection of courses of study and promoting advocacy of the learning needs of elders to educators and gerontologists. This section reveals that older students prefer academic over non-academic classes and prefer classes they select themselves over those chosen by center staff. After a discussion of the program's recognition, both locally and nationally, the success of projects undertaken in local centers and of radio shows for the elderly are assessed. The next section evaluates the liberal arts program of ISOA and includes details of a survey of 180 adults. The survey found that ISOA students were not more satisfied with life, socially active, or involved in the community than other groups and that students reported positive changes resulting from their experience with the program. Then, efforts to extend basic education and English as a Second Language to the elderly, involving surveys, interviews, and the development of a program manual, are outlined. Finally, the effects of funding reductions on ISOA liberal arts programs are examined. Appendices include data on funding, enrollment, attendance, and completion patterns. (HB)

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ANNUAL REPORT

1980-81

INSTITUTE OF STUDY FOR OLDER ADULTS

LIBERAL ARTS AND LANGUAGE SKILLS PROGRAMS

BY: NANCY PIERCE

"At this stage in our lives, we need to find out what it all means..."

New York City Technical College
Division of Continuing Education
and Extension Services
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INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Study for Older Adults Liberal Arts program, during the 1980-81 academic year, provided more than 158 courses to over 3,600 disadvantaged elderly residents of New York City. The courses, modelled on an undergraduate liberal arts curriculum, but adapted to the particular learning interests of older students, are conducted at neighborhood sites throughout the city--senior centers, libraries, residences for the aged, nursing homes and geriatric outpatient clinics.

Fiscal support was provided by the New York City Department for the Aging, under Titles IIIB and X of the Older Americans Act, the New York City Department of Employment, through the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens, Consolidated Edison, Chemical and Independence Savings Banks and a number of the agencies serving as course sites. The operation of the project involves the cooperation of coordinators at the Divisions of Continuing Education of LaGuardia, Borough of Manhattan, and the Bronx Community Colleges, social agency staff, ISOA faculty, and students in planning and conducting the classes.

Although course content and objectives vary considerably from site to site, all courses offered have 3 consistent elements: (1) clearly defined educational objectives appropriate to higher education, in the traditional disciplines of the liberal arts, or basic skills and language education: (2) a goal which enhances or complements, never duplicates or competes with, the programs of the host agency: (3) deliberate involvement of older students in the selection and design of their classes.

The project's twelve year history, from its inception as the college's response to a request for a psychology class from a group of Borough Park elderly, has been detailed in past annual reports.*

This report will concentrate on progress toward continuing objectives; report on special initiatives - in the Adopt-a-Center program, in use of radio as an educational medium, in basic skills education; summarize findings of an evaluation of the liberal arts program; and future goals in light of severe funding cuts for the coming year.

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* Available on request from the Institute of Study for Older Adults, Division of Continuing Education, New York City Technical College

PROGRESS TOWARD CONTINUING OBJECTIVES

Significant progress was made during the 1980-81 academic year toward meeting two particular program objectives - increasing the involvement of students in selection of the course of study, and advocacy for the learning needs of elders to communities of educators and gerontologists.

The mechanism for student choice of program is the on-site student meeting, at which ISOA staff and potential older students determine together the content of the course to be held at the particular site. Administrative cuts in Title IIIB funding for previous years had limited staff time to conduct these meetings, and staff rather than student choice had predominated. Beginning with the fall of 1979, the addition of two CETA Teacher/Administrators and a part-time graduate intern to the staff permitted an effort to increase the number of meetings held during 1979-80 to 51, and for 1980-81 to over 75. A preliminary analysis of enrollment/completion data for 1979-81 * showed that participation, based on both average enrollment and rates of completion, were much higher in classes chosen by students. Further, for these three years, students chose academic subjects nearly twice as often as staff (70.8% vs. 37.4%), and non-academic courses less than 1/3 as often as staff.**

A detailed analysis *** of enrollment and attendance statistics for 1980-81 confirms these patterns:

(1) Older students prefer academic over non-academic classes: In 1980-81, on the average, 7 more students enrolled and 6 more completed academic classes (psychology, the social sciences, philosophy, religion and literature than non-academic (arts, music, movement, health, entitlements, etc.) classes. The average enrollments and rates of completion were higher for academic (28.8, and 63.2%), and lower for non-academic (21.9, and 56%), than the average for the program as a whole (24.4, and 61%).

(2) Older students prefer classes they select for themselves over classes chosen by center staff: Due to continuing restrictions on staff time at the cooperating community colleges, in 1980-81, 52% of all ISOA classes were selected by staff, rather than students (all but 5 of these in Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx). For the city as a whole 7 more students enroll, and 6 more complete, classes chosen by students than classes chosen by staff. As with

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* In preparation for presentation of the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society in the fall of 1981; available on request from the I.S.O.A.

** Staff clearly see topics like Art, Movement and Health as more attractive than students, for they chose these subjects 29.9% of the time, nearly 6 times more than students (5.1%).

*** For the program city-wide, average enrollment was somewhat below the previous year, at 24.4, and completion rates somewhat higher, at an average of 61%.

academic classes, students attend classes they select themselves (average 28.1 enrolled, 64% completion rate) more than average for the program as a whole (24.4 enrolled, 61% completion). By contrast, classes selected by center staff (21.4 enrolled, 57% completion) are less well attended than the program as a whole. This pattern appears to be true regardless of instructor, for it holds throughout the boroughs, where, due to travel restrictions, the instructional staff varies. (Even in Queens, where rates of completion for staff-chosen courses were slightly higher than for student-selected classes, the number completing classes students chose (26.7) is higher than those initially enrolled in staff-selected courses (24.8). (See chart on following page)

For 1980-81, academic courses accounted for 56% of the total number of classes offered, and 66% of the total enrollment. Non-academic courses constituted 23% of the total courses, and 20% of total enrollment; courses in language skills (Reading, Foreign Language, and English as a Second Language) were 20% of the total courses, and 15% of total enrollment. For the coming year, effort to increase the proportion of academic classes will continue, by encouraging center staff to allow student choice of classes, and making these subjects truly accessible to poorly educated older adults, through student meetings which clarify the relationship of the traditional disciplines to daily life. Unfortunately, the loss of support for the Field Representative position and the 3 CETA and Title 10 workers who organized and led many of these sessions during 1980-81, may mean, inevitably, a reduction in the number conducted during 1981-82.

RECOGNITION

The Institute of Study for Older Adults continues to be recognized as a significant endeavor both locally and nationally. The Institute was cited, last fall, in Reaching the Hard-to-Reach* as a program "successful" in over-coming the informational, situational, institutional, and attitudinal barriers to participation by older adults in continuing education. This year, staff members presented or participated in workshops at the national meetings of the National Council for Community Services and Continuing Education of AACJC: The Association for Gerontology in Higher Education; "Old Promises, New Practices", a conference sponsored by FIPSE and the Exxon Education Foundation; the Regional Education and Training Program Conference for Region II of the AoA; and five meetings of FIPSE's National Project IV. In addition, staff members organized a conference on "Assessing the Impact of Education on the Elderly" in New York City, spoke at the Community Council of Greater New York's Mini-White House Conference on the Use of Time by the Elderly, were subjects of 6 radio interviews, provided assistance to the Mayor's Older Bostonians Advisory Council and Boston University in replication of the ISOA, and to the Consumer Education Resource Network, identifying classroom materials for older learners. Further dissemination included guest lectures by the Associate Dean of the Division of Continuing Education, Coordinator of Adult Programs, and Director at classes in "Human Services for the Aged" and "Educational Gerontology", at NYCTC, St. Joseph's College, and Rutgers University Institute of Gerontology

* Spencer, Barbara B., "Overcoming the Age Bias in Continuing Education," in Darkenwald, G., and Larson, S.A. Reaching the Hard-to-Reach. Washington: Jossey Bass, 1980.

BOROUGH	NUMBER OF CLASSES	AVERAGE ENROLLED	AVERAGE COMPLETED	RATE OF COMPLETION
MANHATTAN				
Staff Choice	33	18.4	9.4	51%
Student Choice	11	21.1	15.8	69%
BRONX				
Staff Choice	16	24.3	11.4	47%
Student Choice	6	25.3	14.6	50%
QUEENS				
Staff Choice	24	24.8	17.6	71%
Student Choice	8	39.4	26.7	68%
BROOKLYN				
Staff Choice	5	15.2	6	39%
Student Choice	45	27.6	17.4	63%

ADOPT-A-CENTER

This project, supported by Con Edison, covers instructional costs for intensive courses in five senior centers in the four most populous boroughs. In the second year, the project has succeeded at the William Hodson and William Reid Senior Centers because staff are committed to encourage center members to learn. In both agencies, staff raise no barriers to student choice and arrange for student recognition ceremonies with the center membership as a whole, adding immeasurably to the students' pride. Consistent organization by agency staff throughout the year has created a core group of older learners. At Hodson, center members chose courses related to aging - Health, Biology and Psychology and Sociology, (The fourth course covered by the current grant, the Politics of Aging, will be given in the fall of 1981.) At William Reid, students selected Challenges of the Older Adult (the psychosocial changes related to the aging process), The Mind and the Body (the interaction of biological and psychological age-related changes), and English Workshop (basic reading and writing).

By contrast, at the other three sites, varying difficulties have been encountered. An agency first selected for its essential mission - to coordinate the services offered to the elderly of the surrounding area-has been unable to identify as course sites agencies serving older people with little formal education. At a Hispanic center in Manhattan, staff were resistant to ISOA staff conducting student meetings, and teachers found classes schedules disrupted by conflicting events. At a Harlem center, an initial meeting had revealed a shared interest in basic reading and writing. Sensitive to the stigma of illiteracy among the elderly, who have spent 60 years hiding their lack of skills, both ISOA and center staff were reluctant to announce a basic reading class.* A complex, yet promising scheme was devised, combining the center's interest in black history and the language experience method of teaching basic literacy.** Center staff would encourage members to attend an oral history class, where the instructor would eventually introduce the topic of early schooling. Further along, he would introduce as co-teacher a basic education instructor. Thus, the oral history focus would gradually shift to basic skills as (1) the denial of educational opportunity would emerge as a shared personal concern, and (2) students' own stories would be transcribed for use as class materials by the reading teacher. At present the scheme appears to have foundered - instructors have not been able to form a class with consistent attendance patterns (birthday parties and other popular events compete) and students were not actively involved in the decision to enter a reading class, Nonetheless, the historian conducted individual interviews, which will, in the fall, be edited by the subjects with the reading instructor.

In summary, Con Edison's support permits the ISOA to take risks to provide chances for learning which are simply not possible under the constrictions of scarce public funding.

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*Nonetheless, a lump sum permitting 56 hours of reading instruction was tempting, for public funding for the ISOA permits a maximum of 27 hours yearly in any one agency, thus effectively prohibiting language skills instruction.

** In the language experience method, students' writing, either self-generated or transcribed by the teacher, is used for classroom material in basic skills instruction.)

SENIOR EDITION

Only a small percentage of older New Yorkers attend senior centers, and ISOA courses reach only a small proportion of those. As the beginning of an effort to find ways to involve these potential students, in the fall of 1980 a small-scale test of the impact of radio as a medium for education of the aging was designed with Senior Edition, of WNYC-AM (the NYC municipal radio station). The objective was to monitor the feedback from older listeners of of an ISOA - produced radio course, through elderly group discussion leaders, at 3 senior centers in Brooklyn and Queens. With support from Brooklyn Union Gas, the ISOA prepared background material, recruited, trained and conducted several evaluation meetings with the leaders. (Senior Edition staff performed all the technical work involved - conducting interviews, editing tapes, etc.) The course covered information needed in dealing with the major income needs and psychosocial crises of old age - institutionalization, funeral and estate planning, and entitlements. At Catherine Sheridan Senior Center in Queens, and Scheuer House and Council Center for Senior Citizens in Brooklyn, the older leaders assembled groups to listen to, and discuss, each show. Reaction to the shows* varied considerably, based on the content presented, and the context of the listeners. For instance, on wills and estate planning, listeners were eager for whatever information the show, and the leaders, could give, while the show on funeral planning was universally rejected. (In one center, only 3 came to the discussion, that day, and in another resistance was so high the leader cancelled the day's session.) At centers with strong information and referral systems, information on social security, SSI, and Medicaid was of little interest.

Both Senior Edition and ISOA staff feel more time and funding than currently available would be required to produce additional shows. However, ISOA learned something of the potential of media for outreach. Center staff were fascinated by the idea of the project and highly supportive of the leaders in their organization of groups. (The tapes of the shows will be used again in a similar format, this fall, at two of the centers.) However, despite the power of the media to attract an audience initially, in a sense the results of the Senior Edition experiment resemble ISOA's experience with entitlement classes selected by center staff because "they need to know about this". That is, even glamor is ineffective in conveying content which, however, useful, is not of interest (i.e. entitlement regulations) or threatening (planning for death or institutionalization) to the listener. When future funding permits, the ISOA will attempt to use liberal arts content (i.e. psychology or the social sciences), to test the potential of radio to reach out to the many older New Yorkers presently unserved.

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* Attempts to elicit quantitative evaluation data, utilizing rating scales on content and presentation, were fruitless, as older leaders were reluctant to distribute the scales.

AN EVALUATION OF THE LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM OF THE ISOA*

In the fall of 1979, a 17 month grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) allowed the Institute the first opportunity for evaluation of its program model. Examining the varieties of Liberal Education (LEVA), titled National Project IV by FIPSE, involved 14 associate institutions engaged in liberal education in nontraditional settings, or using innovative curricula, in a consortium coordinated by the Institute of Higher Education of the University of Michigan. Using diverse designs, the institutions were to evaluate the impact of their programs on students, seek commonalities among the effects reported, and systematically define the values and expected outcomes of liberal education.

For the ISOA, the grant provided the first opportunity to examine the demographic characteristics of those served, the relationship of learning with factors of social adjustment, self-esteem and life satisfaction in the aged, and the effectiveness of certain program operations. The project has succeeded in attracting and retaining large numbers of students (between 4,000 and 5,000 per year) seen by most educators as uneducable because of low literacy levels and lack of previous exposure to intellectual inquiry. Nonetheless, the program's marginal status - existing on the periphery of the fields both of education and service to the aging, has resulted in an unstable pattern of support. Within this context, then, the LEVA evaluation was seen as an opportunity to translate reports of dramatic change in both self-concept and behavior of individual ISOA students into quantitative measures. (As part of the National Project IV effort, concurrently, the relevance of the traditional goals of liberal education for older students was also explored).

Unfortunately, the pre-/posttest design which could measure such effects directly was not feasible in the 17 month period allowed by the grant. However, it was assumed that students enrolled consistently over several years in ISOA classes would behave differently from their peers as a result of the experience. Thus the hypothesized impact of liberal education would be reflected in students' greater sense of independence and autonomy, more extensive social support systems ("networks") and greater social interaction, involvement in community activities, and sense of life satisfaction than their counterparts. To test this hypothesis, from a list of centers in the program 3 years or more, 10 agencies were randomly selected; from those served by these agencies, a sample totalling 180 was drawn (20 from each of the 9 agencies which participated). Three groups, all randomly selected, composed the sample: from each agency 10 students who had completed 3 or more ISOA classes (total 90); 5 active members who had taken no classes, (total 45); and 5 members who seldom participated in any center activity (total 45).** A questionnaire with scales designed to measure the size of the subject's social network and degree of social interaction, feelings about and involvement with his community, and sense of satisfaction with life, was administered to the entire sample. Demographic data was sought from all 3 groups, and several scales designed to elicit a quantitative measure of the students' response to taking a class were also included (for the students but not the controls).

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* A full report of this study is available for postage cost of $2.00 from the Institute of Study for Older Adults

** Two control groups were included to permit comparison of the "avid student" not only with his peers in the senior center but with community residents.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

Analysis of the resulting data failed to confirm the hypothesis. ISOA students were not more satisfied with life, socially active, or involved in their communities; and they did not have larger social networks than the control groups. (In fact, although they reported that taking courses resulted in the predicted changes, on the Perceived Well-Being Scale (a measure approximating life satisfaction) the learners scored lower than those who didn't take courses). Analysis yielded 3 discrete sets of data: (1) demographic characteristics of the sample; (2) scores on scales for Perceived Well-Being, Social Network, Social Interaction, Community Perception and Community Involvement for all 3 groups, and; (3) quantitative measures of students' response to the program. Major significant results included: (1) demographic differences between groups - course takers were slightly younger, more likely to be married, less to have been widowed or divorced, and better educated than both control groups; (2) although there was no significant difference in feelings about, or involvement in, their communities, in their social activities, or in their living situations, coursetakers were much less satisfied with their lives than both control groups, and (3) despite their lower sense of well-being, students themselves reported dramatically positive changes resulting from the experience. Students felt that choosing their own courses gave them a feeling of confidence and control over one's life; that life was better, more worth living, and hard times more tolerable, and; that both friendships and social activities had increased as a result of taking ISOA classes.

Thus, the scores on scales designed to quantify life satisfaction, social network, etc., contradict the effects reported by ISOA students when asked directly. Conceivably, these particular scales were inappropriate instruments for use with this population; certainly future investigations will utilize qualitative data from open-ended interviews as well as quantitative measures. Nonetheless, these results imply certain possibilities. Factors not explored in this study - i.e. declining health and income, role loss - have far greater direct impact on the quality of the older person's life in this country than education could. Possibly ISOA coursetakers, are, for some reason, less willing to deny this pain and the losses implicit in growing older than their peers. These older students had, on the average, 2 years or more previous formal education than the other members of their centers. Possibly the questioning of the ordinary encouraged by learning discourages acceptance of the banality of the restrictive existence of the aged. Those who feel some sense of discomfort with the norm (i.e. the more highly educated) may seek out what opportunities for growth or understanding present themselves within the constricted boundaries of their lives (such as the ISOA program). In any case the study implies that, whatever the "effect" of education for the older student, it neither "improves" social adjustment, nor helps students accept the constrictions of growing old. Rather, liberal education, by integrating past and present concrete experience with the conceptual frameworks of the disciplines, may contribute to the maturation of those who, feeling loss more than peers, seek to question the meaning of life as it nears its end.

EXTENDING BASIC EDUCATION AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TO THE ELDERLY

In July, 1980, the Institute was awarded a small planning grant from the N.Y. State Department of Education, Bureau of Basic Continuing Education, under Section 310 of the Adult Education Act, to conduct a study, and make recommendations for the involvement of older students in basic education and English as a Second Language programs in New York State. Although Section 311 of the Adult Education Act has since 1978 mandated the provision of such programs for older learners, in fact Congress has appropriated no funds, no programs have been established, and the literature is scant. The Institute's project collected information on the experience of what small efforts have been mounted, both nationally and in the New York City area, and formulated planning recommendations for effective administrative models and classroom practices. The effort had three major goals:

1. investigation and description of the target population for both basic education and English as a Second Language, including demographic indicators of need, learning needs and motivations, and attitudes toward education;

2. identification of factors affecting program development and administration, including transportation, site, resources, attitudes, and community vs. city-wide recruitment methods;

3. identification of appropriate materials and teaching methods, and of the capacity of older students for language learning.

Project staff conducted surveys of 42 senior centers and 21 ABE programs, interviewed 17 senior center directors, 4 gerontologists, 10 ABE administrators, 13 ABE and ESL instructors experienced in work with older students, and 56 older adults attending basic education and ESL classes. The literature on learning needs and program development in ABE, on what programs have been mounted for the elderly in the U.S., Canada and western Europe, on cognitive needs for language learning and on cognitive change in the aging process was reviewed. Statistical information on the demographics indicating a need for basic education and English as a Second Language was examined and compared with survey and interview results. Both classroom methods in ABE and ESL and materials in common use were assessed. Classroom methods and recruitment techniques were tested in four pilot classes, each based on a variation of the Institute's college/community agency collaboration model.

This project, though often difficult and frustrating, pioneered in the collection and synthesis of knowledge about ABE and ESL for the aged. This , the first organized investigation into the problem, documented both information about specific elements (i.e. motivations, attitudes of teachers and senior center staff, cognitive capacity for language learning, etc.) and the dynamic relations all aspects of program planning in determining both participation and impact on the older learner. The project illuminated differences between older and younger ABE students, and confirmed that statistical descriptors of language-needy older students resemble the demographic characteristics of younger students. The interviews and surveys created a

profile of the language-needy aged, their relations with social service and educational projects, and specific discrepancies in orientation and priorities between ABE and senior center staff. Further, the exploratory nature of the grant allowed risky experimentation with diverse administrative models, recruitment and classroom techniques (i.e., non-traditional classroom materials, tying reading and writing in oral history, etc.), to learn what does and doesn't succeed. The pilot classes were strengthened by the ability to combine funds from a total of 5 sources separate from the granting agency,* and from experimentation with methods and materials, comparison of theory and practice, and eliciting student response and preferences.

A manual for program planning, Extending Basic Education to the Elderly, ** based on the year's work, will be useful for both social workers and adult educators who wish to establish language courses for older people. It includes discussion of the needs and attitudes toward learning of the older illiterate, how classroom methods can be adapted to the particular patterns of learning typical of the aging, and how the choice of community or central sites, of educational or social service agencies to administer programs, and various recruitment methods affect program effectiveness. Suggestions include:

1. that planners look closely at the local situation - at who and where the language-needy are, and what programs already exist, before formulating programs;

2. how to evaluate existing ABE programs and senior centers as sites;

3. that teaching methods be based on understanding of the older student's cognitive assets and deficits: on the desire for communicative language; the need for clarity in print and the spoken word; the need for repetition and reiteration of material; a reliance on learned associations and organizational clues for retrieval of what has been learned; a tendency to self-doubt of one's ability to learn, and reluctance to respond; and a decided preference for group learning over the tutorial methods widely used;

4. that materials be chosen for clarity of content and print or sound, and for interest to adult students;

5. that classes meet at least twice weekly, for a bare minimum of 60 hours instruction (200 hours is preferred), and older students receive some concrete recognition of their achievement.

A brief, annotated resource list is also included.

ISOA staff presented initial project findings to the annual meeting of the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education in March, 1981, and will deliver a paper based on the manual's recommendations at the 1981 Adult Education

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* The N.Y.C. Department for the Aging, under Titles IIIB and X of the Older Americans Act, administered by the N.Y. State Office of the Aging; the N.Y.C. Department of Employment, under Title VI of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, through the N.Y. Foundation for Senior Citizens; Action for Russian Immigrants, a project of the Associated Young Men/Women's Hebrew Association of Greater New York with support from the N.Y. State Education Department, the Block Resettlement Grant Program, and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies; and Consolidated Edison, under a grant to the ISOA's Adopt-A-Center program.

** Available upon request from the ISOA, for a postage fee of $2.00.

Association/National Association for Public Continuing Education conference in Anaheim, California, in October. Hopefully, these presentations and distribution of the manual will generate interest in replication among both social service workers and educators, many of whom do recognize the enormous need for language skills education among older adults. But the heritage of a lifetime of educational deprivation and discrimination will not easily be eradicated. Age emphasizes the constraints on older people who cannot speak or read English, and accentuates the need for language fluency as the base for a full life of communicative competence and continued personal growth, rather than employment preparation. Significant issues for planning and organization are inherent in meeting the need; local strategies must resolve problems of site location, flexible schedules, combination of resources, and recruitment. The project found that two elements are critical to success: the collaboration of social service agencies and educators, and acceptance of older student's personal experience, learning objectives and patterns. The most rewarding participation takes place when the educational objective is clear to all involved, agency staff and students, and where educators provide leadership in creating content and structured classroom activities which account for elders' maturity and learning needs.

The language learning needs of older illiterates and non-readers are easily ignored, though, by both educational and aging policymakers. An unfortunate coincidence of fiscal constriction in current public funding for the ISOA, and the end of the grant from the N.Y. State Education Department, will mean that the ISOA, despite this accumulation of experience and insight in this crucial area, cannot this year continue basic education and English as a Second Language classes. (Two centers sponsored under the Adopt-a-Center program by Consolidated Edison will continue reading and ESL classes.) However, the Institute hopes to obtain corporate support for such courses at individual sites during the year, will continue to promote interest in basic education for the aged among both educators and social service workers, and will seek funding for administrative support for coherent programming from both educational and "aging network" agencies.

THE STUDENTS SPEAK

The spirit and value of both language learning and liberal arts classes ultimately are best captured through the reactions of agency staff and students to the learning process. Here, then, are a few glimpses of the day-to-day program operation, taken from random site visits by staff throughout the year:

- An older man, at Council Center in Brooklyn, to a visitor - "Learning in these classes lifts a great weight that's been dragging you..."

-An older woman at a Bellevue student meeting, asked why she wants to study philosophy - "At this stage in our lives, we need to find out what it all means..."

-A hospital administrator, to an ISOA staff member at a graduation - "In this class, I heard people speak who'd never said anything, in any kind of group we've had before ..."

-A social worker, on ESL students at Ridgewood-Bushwick Senior Center - "They look at me now. They used to never look me in the eye before. They'd just look down, or go get somebody to translate."

-A reading student, at Community Roundtable of Bushwick, with a daughter and granddaughter at college - "We got so I called my daughter when I didn't know a word or

understand. That's OK 'cause she called her daughter to get help too. We've just been talking school for months!"

EFFECTS OF FUNDING REDUCTIONS

As of the end of 1980, funding for the ISOA Liberal Arts program apoeared to have stabilized at a level permitting up to 195* courses yearly, from the following sources: 100 from Title IIIB of the Older Americans Act through the New York City Department for the Aging; 40-60 with instructional costs paid by the host agency or corporate donations; 25 conducted by CETA teachers, through the N.Y. Foundation for Senior Citizens; and 10-12 conducted by an instructor employed under Title X of the Older Americans Act, through the New York City Department for the Aging. Severe funding cuts for the 1981-82 academic year, in Titles IIIB and X of the Older Americans Act, and CETA, will affect both the numbers of persons, and the choice of who will be served. About 128 courses will be conducted, supported as follows:**

FUNDING SOURCE	1980-81	1981-82
Title 3B, OAA (NYCDFTA)	100	- 0 -
N.Y. State Rec. (NYCDFTA)	-	58
C E T A	25	- 0 -
Title 10	10	- 0 -
Corporate Donations	20	30
Paid by Agency	20	30
	195	128

The changes resulting from the altered funding levels and patterns an be summarized as follows:

1) Potentially, 1,809 students will not be able to be served, who would have attended classes at 35 agencies dropped from the program, mostly in Manhattan and the Bronx.

2) The loss of administrative support and coherence lent by the availability of CETA and Title X workers and a part-time field representative to organize classes will restrict courses to those sites in which agency staff are most cooperatve in ensuring smooth operation of the program.

3) Loss of CETA and Title X instructors will restrict the project's already limited capacity for conducting classes in Basic Reading and English as a Second Language, which require substantially more classroom time than liberal arts courses. The project will thus, in effect, be further limited in its ability to achieve a continuing program objective - outreach to non-English speaking and minority elderly.

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* Due to varying patterns of CETA employment and delays in corporate funding for certain centers, about 150-160 courses were actually offered in any given year.

** Administrative support, for 1981-82, will be provided by N.Y.C. Technical College.

4) Emphasis in organizing the program will shift from responsible management of public funds to generating relatively small corporate donations for instruction, and from experimentation in program design* to an emphasis on efficient operation of the basic liberal arts design.

The loss of funding under Title IIIB, stable - despite variations in levels - since 1976, was occasioned by a drastic cut in Federal appropriations. The Reagan administration has proposed consolidation of all Title 3 (social service) and nutrition program monies for fiscal year '82. Though the consequences of such a block grant cannot be predicted at this time, if the result is a substantial decrease in funds coming to the city mandated for social services, Title IIIB support for the program can not be restored. New York State Recreation program funds for instructional costs may continue, but without substantial administrative support, the operation of the project would be jeopardized.

Thus, the marginal funding status of the program indicates a major challenge for the next few years: to keep the project viable and effective through times of drastic reductions in spending both for services to the aging, and education for adults in diverse arenas. Beyond this goal, however, several objectives will guide the project's direction:

1) To investigate and document the impact of learning on older students. Anecdotal evidence, the self-reports of students, and the implications of some of the findings of the study described in this report indicate dramatic change in individual students as a result of being involved in ISOA classes. Yet even the intensive data collection and analysis permitted by the FIPSE grant has not succeeded in specifying what the effect is, beyond tantalizing clues. The possibilities raised by this initial exploration of the older learner's motivations and rewards will be further examined in subsequent evaluation research.

2) To maintain the essential academic content and goal of challenge to the older learner. A continuing conflict between the program objectives of the ISOA and of the agencies whose clients are students is inherent in program design. The elderly poor must depend on professionals as advocates on their behalf, in a system which assumes they are incapable of, and fails to provide the supports for maintaining their own personal health and welfare. As a result, social service staff workers come to perceive their clients as passive, dependent, and needy, as unable to make decisions or act on their own behalf. The institute strives to involve in cognitive growth experiences clients whose other ties to social support systems tend to involve them in a network of dependency. Thus, since the program's objectives contradict the daily experience of both staff and older adults, ISOA staff struggle constantly to maintain the essence of the model - a focus on respect for older learners, and on maturation and growth.

3) To encourage replication of the program model by other educators: Despite continuing difficulties - in administration, funding, and maintenance of academic excellence - and the lack of quantitative evidence of the program's effect, literally thousands of learners viewed by many in the

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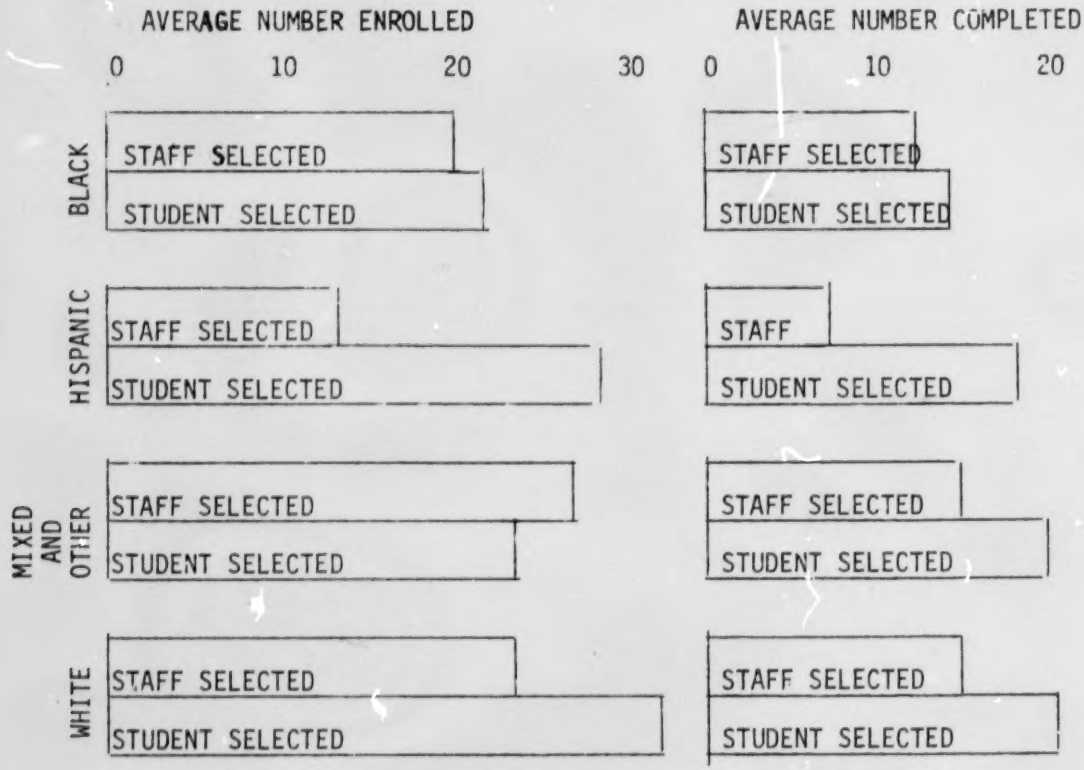
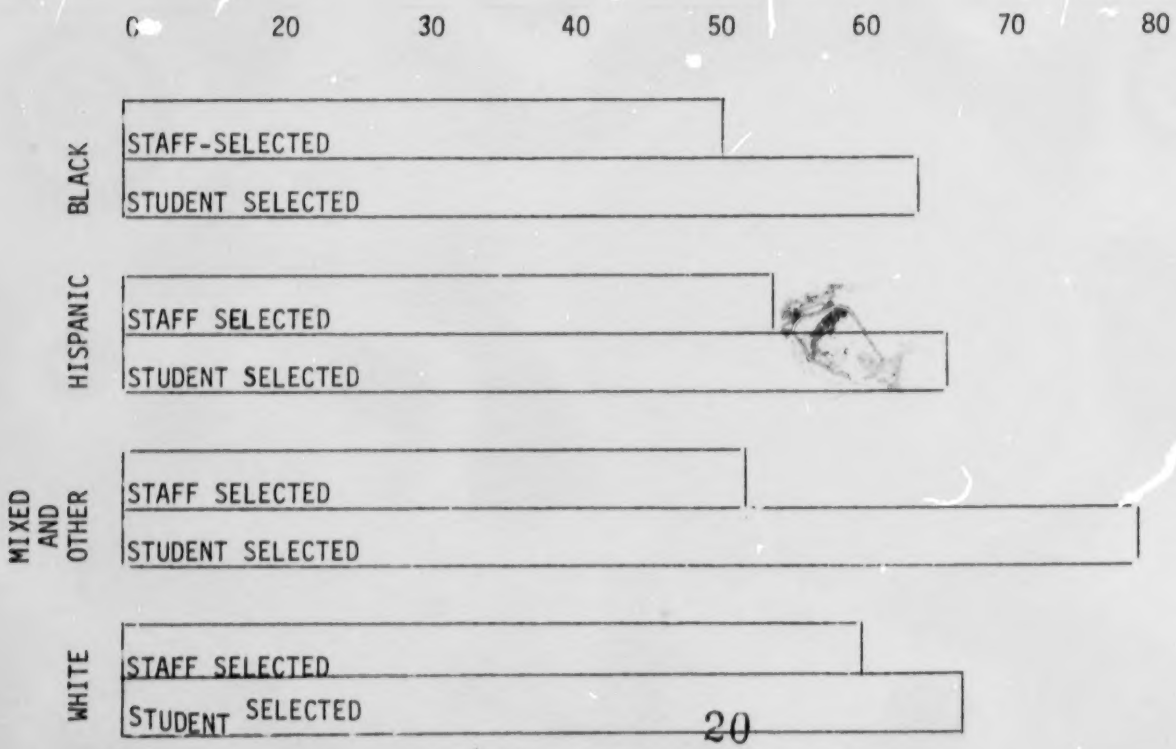
* i.e., offering classes on radio, compiling oral histories for material for teaching reading, etc.

fields of education and aging as "unreachable" and "unteachable" have become involved in learning. This success compels continuing efforts to encourage adaptation of the outreach and academic content elements of the program design with other older students.

RATES OF ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION, BY NUMBERS OF STUDENTS, BY RACE, ISOA, 1980-81



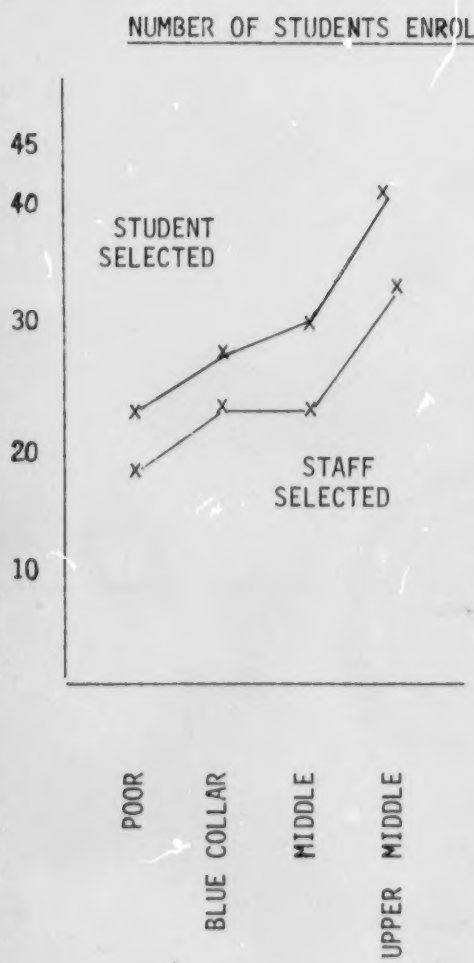
RATES OF COMPLETION, BY STAFF AND STUDENT SELECTION AND RACE
ISOA, 1980-81

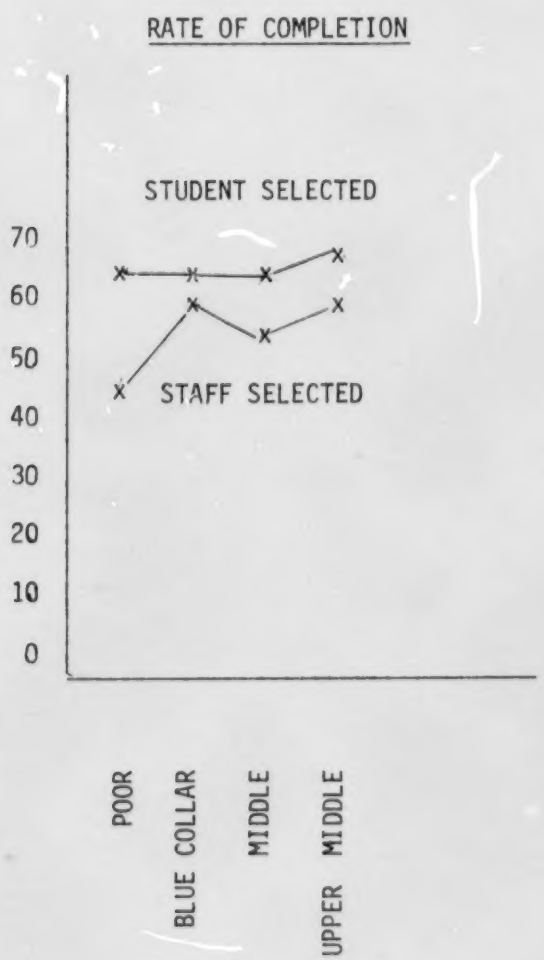


RATES OF ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION

FOR

STAFF - SELECTED AND STUDENT - SELECTED CLASSES, BY INCOME LEVEL, ISOA,1980-81





FUNDING, ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE PATTERNS

FUNDING

Although Title 3B funding, from the New York City Department for the Aging, supported the majority of the classes offered in the past year, over 30% were paid for from other sources, principally Con Edison (9.8%) and the host agencies themselves (8.5%).

CLASSES BY FUNDING SOURCES, 1980-81

FUNDING SOURCE	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Bronx	Staten Island	Total City-Wide	% of Total
Title IIIB, OAA [1]	34	25	29	16	1	105	68.6%
Title X, OAA [1]	3	7	--	--	-	10	6.5%
Corporate Contributions [2]	6	5	1	3	-	15	9.8%
Volunteer	2	--	--	--	-	2	1.3%
CETA [3]	3	4	1	1	-	8	5.2%
Paid by Agency	3	4	3	3	-	13	8.5%
TOTAL	51	45	33	23	1	153	

CLASSES BY BOROUGH, 1980-81	# of Classes	Total Enrolled	Total Completed	Average # Enrolled	Average # Completed	Rate of Completion
Manhattan	47	933	484	19.8	10.2	52%
Bronx	22	540	271	24.5	12.3	50%
Brooklyn	50	1,319	815	26.4	16.3	62%
Queens	33	934	654	28.3	19.8	70%
Staten Island	1	71	46	----	----	65%
TOTAL	153	3,797	2,270	24.8	14.8	60%

[1] through N.Y.C.D.F.T.A

[2] Con Edison 14, Chemical Bank 1

[3] from N.Y.C Department of Employment, through the N.Y. Foundation for Senior Citizens.

ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE PATTERNS

Judging from the number of courses offered, enrollment and attendance records, psychology and the social sciences* were the most popular courses in the program again this year. Over half of all ISOA classes (56%) and nearly half of those students chose themselves, (67%) were in these two areas. A high proportion of all classes (about one fifth) were in language skills: reading and English as a Second Language (ESL). (The availability of a coordinator funded by the New York State Education Department and CETA instructors in ESL and Spanish allowed an increase in reading and ESL classes to nearly double the previous year's offerings.) Courses in the humanities, the arts, and foreign languages all declined for 1980-81.

COMPARISON OF ISOA COURSES, 1967-81, By TOPIC

	1969-79	1979-80	1980-81
Psychology	15.5%	15.6%	19.3%
Social Sciences	27.6%	27.9%	33.3%
Humanities (Art, Music, Drama, Literature Philosophy, Religion)	15.3%	21.1%	11.4%
Health	10.0%	6.8%	5.3%
Movement	7.6%	4.5%	2.7%
Other	- 0 -	6.1%	4.0%
Science	.7%	.7%	- 0 -
Basic Language Skills (Reading & ESL)	11.0%	9.5%	18.0%
Foreign Languages	9.2%	7.5%	2.7%

* History, economics, political science, anthropology, sociology, international relations.

COURSES OFFERED, 1981-82, CITY-WIDE

ACADEMIC	# of Classes	% of Total	# Enrolled	# Completed	Average Enrolled	Aver. Comp.	% Comp.
Psychology	29	19.3%	836	535	28.8	18.4	64%
Social Sciences	50	33.3%	1,461	928	29.2	18.6	64%
Science	- 0 -	.0%	- 0 -	-0-	-0-	-0-	-----
Humanities (Philosopy/Religion)	4	2.7%	105	54	26.3	13.5	51%
Literature	1	.6%	17	13	17.0	13.0	76%
TOTAL ACADEMIC	84	56%	2,419	1,530	28.8	18.2	63%
NON-ACADEMIC							
Art Appreciation	10	6.7%	189	96	18.9	9.6	51%
Movement	4	2.7%	74	41	18.5	10.2	55%
Health	8	5.3%	220	110	27.5	13.7	50%
Legal Rights	3	2.0%	67	44	22.3	14.7	66%
Music Appreciation	3	2.0%	82	58	27.3	19.3	71%
Other	6	4.0%	113	68	18.8	11.3	60%
TOTAL NON-ACADEMIC	34	22.6%	745	417	21.9	12.2	55.9%
LANGUAGE SKILLS							
Foreign Language	4	2.7%	68	45	17.0	11.3	66%
Reading	9	6.0%	143	74	15.9	8.2	52%
English as a Second Language	18	12.0%	280	158	15.6	8.7	56%
TOTAL LANGUAGE	34	20.6%	491	277	15.8	8.9	56.4%

The effect of student choice, race and socioeconomic status on patterns of enrollment over the past 3 years of the project's history were studied in preparation for presentation to the Gerontological Society in the fall of 1981. Figures for 1980-81 reflect the major effects of these factors.

1-Students prefer courses they choose themselves:

When students are deliberately involved in choosing a class,even if it's the same course chosen by staff members, more come to the class, generally more often. Even in academic classes, the proportion of students enrolling who come to 6 or more sessions is the same regardless of who chose the class; nearly 5 more students, on the average, enroll in a class. And, for non-academic and language classes, 20% more students complete classes they chose.

2-Students choose different classes than staff choose for them and prefer academic study to "expressive" or "coping" skills learning: Except in language skills, which staff and students choose in the same proportions, about 20%, the older student's preference

for academic learning and lack of interest in art, movement, health, etc., is often not perceived by those who plan their programs. For instance, in 1980-81, more than 7 out of 10 groups of older students chose academic topics to study, but only 4 of 10 of the classes selected by center staff were in these areas. Center workers, by contrast, chose the arts, movement, health, legal rights, and social action more than 5 times as often as students. Clearly, even those who value the older person's need for learning sufficiently to put forth the extra effort required to organize a class frequently underestimate their clients' capacities or interest in intellectual challenges.

COMPARISON OF SELECTED CLASSES BY STAFF AND STUDENT CHOICE, CITY-WIDE, 1980-81

	% of TOTAL	Average Enrolled	Average Completed	Rate of Completion
ALL ACADEMIC CLASSES				
Staff-chosen	41%	24.4	15.4	63%
Student-chosen	72.8%	31.6	20	63%
Staff/Student Difference	+31.8%	+7.2	+4.6	-0-
ALL NON-ACADEMIC CLASSES				
Staff-chosen	37.2%	22.1	11.7	53%
Student-chosen	7.1%	21.0	15.0	72%
Staff/Student Difference	-30.1%	-1.1	+3.3	+19%
ALL LANGUAGE CLASSES				
Staff-chosen	20%	14.5	6.5	45.5%
Student-chosen	22%	17.5	11.8	67.3%
Staff/Student Difference	+2%	+8.0	+5.3	+21.8%
PSYCHOLOGY				
Staff-chosen	12.8%	24.5	16.0	65%
Student-chosen	22.8%	32.4	20.4	63%
Staff/Student Difference	+10%	+7.9	+4.4	-2%
SOCIAL SCIENCE				
Staff-chosen	23.1%	24.8	15.0	61%
Student-chosen	44.3%	32.0	20.6	65%
Staff/Student Difference	+21.2%	+7.2	=5.6	+4%
ART				
Staff=chosen	12.8%	18.9	9.6	51%
Student-chosen	------N O N E		--------N O N E	---------

	% of TOTAL	Average Enrolled	Average Completed	Rate of Completion
MOVEMENT				
Staff-chosen	5.1%	18.5	10.3	55%
Student-chosen	----------	----------	N O N E	----------
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE*				
Staff-chosen	17.9%	14.6	7.2	50%
Student -chosen	5.7%	17.5	14.25	67.3%
Staff/Student Difference	-12.2%	+2.9	+7.05	+17.3%
READING				
Staff-chosen	2.6%	13.0	5.5	42%
Student-chosen	10%	16.7	9.0	54%
Staff/Student Difference	+7.4%	+3.7	+3.5	+12%

For 1980-81, approximately 36% of ISOA students were black, Hispanic, or Asian, compared with estimates for the city as a whole of 19.4% [1] total non-white elderly population. Income levels were: 23% poor; 38% working class; 31% middle class (low-level white collar); and 7% upper middle class (managerial, technical). Race appears to be weakly linked to enrollment and attendance patterns; Black and Hispanics have lower average enrollment than whites and racially mixed groups, but rates of completion are nearly the same. More strongly associated are income level and levels of enrollment and completion in ISOA classes, implying that the true influence on participation may well be amount of previous education,[2] rather than race or socio-economic status alone.

AUG 13 1982

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EE 36

* The vagaries of CETA employment patterns caused the ISOA to be without a Spanish-speaking worker to conduct student meetings for the first 5 months of the year. Thus, for Hispanic students, many more ESL classes were chosen of necessity by staff than students.

[1] 1976 estimates, New York City Department for the Aging Research Unit: 11.3% Black, 6.0% Hispanic, 2.1% other, 80.6% White

[2] A factor which, in the National Project IV evaluation, differentiated students from non-students within the same racial and socioeconomic groups.

RACE AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF STUDENTS, CITY-WIDE

RACIAL COMPOSITION:	# OF CLASSES	# ENROLLED	# COMPLETED	AVERAGE ENROLLED	AVERAGE COMPLETED	RATE OF COMPLETION	% OF TOTAL
BLACK	27	530	295	19.6	10.9	56%	17.6%
WHITE	98	2,646	1,625	27.0	16.5	61%	64%
HISPANIC	17	249	144	14.6	8.5	58%	11%
MIXED	9	233	150	25.9	16.6	64%	6%
ASIAN	1	- 21	- 0 -	21.0	10	48%	.7%
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS:							
POOR	38	668	368	17.6	9.6	51%	23%
BLUE COLLAR	58	1,421	876	24.5	15.1	62%	38%
MIDDLE CLASS	47	1,278	773	27.2	16.4	60%	81%
UPPER MIDDLE CLASS	10	382	253	38.2	25.3	66%	7%

Student involvement in course selection appears to be critical in enhancing enrollment and attendance regardless of the race or socioeconomic status of students, as the above charts show. With only one exception, number enrolled, number completing, and rates of completion were higher for student-selected classes in every racial and income group analyzed.